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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights eight states that have implemented alternate assessments for children with disabilities who cannot participate in their state and district-wide assessment programs. The alternate assessment systems in Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia are briefly described, along with their development status and how the states are handling and using the data from their alternate assessments. Results from the study indicate there are many scoring, reporting, and use decisions yet to be made. Yet, generally, these states have advanced training and staff development systems established and, with the exception of Minnesota, states have taken remarkably similar approaches to staff development for teachers implementing the alternate assessments. Initially, draft training manuals and other materials were prepared and small groups of teachers were convened to hear how the assessment process would work. These field test participants implemented the systems for a short period and returned to provide feedback, which was used to refine the materials before a larger pilot test was implemented. The study also found that most states used a portfolio approach to alternate assessments and chose to base their alternate assessments on a pool of standards drawn from their state general education standards. (CR)

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Alternate Alternates: A Medley of Alternate Assessments

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Alternate assessment is the term used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1997 (IDEA '97) that refers to the assessment of certain students with disabilities. Specifically, the State or local education agency, as appropriate, has been charged to develop "guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs" (612(a)(17)(A)(i)). The IDEA regulations go on to say that reports to the public must include "aggregated data that include the performance of children with disabilities . . . and disaggregated data on the performance of children with disabilities" ((§300.139(b)(1)(2)). The task of designing appropriate and valid alternate assessments for these students while allowing for aggregation and disaggregation of the data has proved to be immense.

Since each state and the other entities that receive funding under Part B of IDEA for special education services were required to have their alternate assessment system operational by July 1, 2000, each entity should have in effect some degree of implementation. However, a number of states have not started, and others are only through the initial steps (NCEO, 1999). Olsen (1998) suggested that states must address seven major areas as they develop their systems:

1. Why assess? What is the state's philosophy about the assessment and for what purpose will students be assessed through an alternate method?

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2. Who should be assessed? What are the state's participation criteria for alternate assessment?
3. What should be assessed? To what extent will the state's standards for the alternate assessment be the same as the state's standards and curriculum for all students?
4. When to assess? Must there be an alternate for each large-scale assessment used in a district or state? Should the testing occur at the same time and for the same duration as the general assessment?
5. How to assess and score? Will there be a single measure or multiple measures, and will those be administered at a single point in time or over time? How will reliability and validity be established?
6. How to report and use data? To what extent will data be aggregated and disaggregated for alternate assessments versus being included in a general report of all students? How will confidentiality be protected when aggregating and disaggregating data for small numbers of students?
7. How should the state engage in development and training? Who will actually develop the state's alternate assessment and how will they undertake this initiative? How will users be trained?

As states have progressed further in their development efforts, questions five, six, and seven have become increasingly significant. This paper was initiated to highlight states that:

- Have addressed the methods used, scoring, reporting, use, and training,

- Exhibit innovative ideas in their planning and development of alternate assessments,
- Are relatively advanced in their development and implementation, and
- Are thought to have a high probability of full implementation and possibly stronger accountability than is currently in place.

Nominations were obtained from Regional Resource Center technical assistance providers working in the area of assessment (See the Appendix for the procedures). Two states that have been well documented elsewhere, Kentucky and Maryland (see Kleinert, Haigh, Thurlow, Kearns, & Kennedy, 1998; Olsen, 1998), were eliminated from consideration in order to provide readers with fresh perspectives. The states nominated and chosen for this investigation were Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia. These states are at various stages in both their philosophies regarding scoring, reporting, and use of alternate assessment data and in their development of methods for this key area. Alternate assessment has proven to be a fluid process, and each of these states' plans have been altered to some extent in the months preceding the completion of this synthesis in the summer of 2000. While we chose these eight states based on their likelihood to be of high quality, we cannot be certain which meet the requirements of Title I and IDEA.

Simply describing how they are scoring, reporting, and using data without describing some of the other parameters of their systems would beg questions about methods, standards, and participation criteria. Therefore, we briefly describe each system and its development status and then focus on how they are handling and using the data

from their alternate assessments. We conclude with some general observations based on these eight states and on our work with other states.

Delaware

Delaware began its development activities in the 1997-1998 school year for the Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment (DAPA). They contracted with the University of Delaware's Center for Disability Studies (Delaware's University Affiliated Program funded under the Developmental Disabilities Act) to provide technical assistance and logistical support for development of their system. They have continued development through the use of a Portfolio Design Group, refinement of the process by additional committees, and ongoing advice from a larger stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Methods. Delaware's assessment is based on an alternate portfolio. The working portfolios are to be kept throughout a student's school career and submitted for students reaching the ages of 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 20 as of August 31st of the assessment year. Submission of a portfolio at ages 8, 11, 14, and 17 parallels the assessment of general education students who are assessed in grades three, five, eight, and ten. The following are required components for each portfolio:

- Participation guidelines checklist,
- Table of contents,
- A letter from a parent or primary caregiver,
- Student letter to the reviewer,
- IEP components (goals, objectives, and related services),
- Cover sheet and entry evidence. Each portfolio must have at least five entries addressing the five domains (standards below),

- Student schedule, and
- Resume (only for students ages 20 and older).

The purposes of the Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment are two-fold. First, the DAPA is designed to provide information on individual student performance and achievement across one's school career. The second purpose is to provide a measure for program accountability. The portfolio components, independent of the scoring system, will reflect student progress. The scoring system, designed to reflect best practices for students in a functional curriculum, will yield information regarding program accountability. The portfolio system documents student progress including work samples, teacher/parent/peer reports, self-reports, program data, captioned photographs and video tapes/audio tapes.

Standards. Delaware spent an extensive amount of time developing a document entitled "Standards for Functional Life Skills Curriculum." Since Delaware is developing one accountability assessment system that includes all students, they considered it important to link the alternate assessment program to the academic content standards. Fourteen of the 38 Content Standards for all students in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science were found to be pertinent to all students in functional programs, and these 14 have either been adopted outright or modified by changing the wording (i.e., a bridge standard). In addition, 18 Functional Standards were developed to reflect those areas or domains that are explicit goals of functional programs. The functional standards are in the following five domains:

- Communication,
- Personal management,

- Social,
- Career/Vocational, and
- Applied Academics.

Guidelines For Participation. The guidelines for participation in the DAPA are listed on an Eligibility Guidelines Checklist. This checklist must be included in the portfolio and signed by all IEP team members, and the student's educational profile must contain evidence to support the decision that the student:

- Demonstrates cognitive ability and adaptive skill levels which prevent completion of academic curricula even with modifications and accommodations;
- Requires extensive direct instruction and multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of skills;
- Is unable to use academic skills at a minimal competency level when instructed through typical classroom instruction; and
- Is unable to complete the academic curricula not as a result of excessive or extended absences or primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities; emotional-behavioral disabilities; specific learning disabilities; or social, cultural, and economic differences.

For students who are 14 years of age or older, an additional criterion is applied. It requires that to be included in the alternate assessment, such students must be unable to complete a regular program even with modifications and be unable to acquire, maintain, or generalize skills and demonstrate performance without intense, individualized instruction and be working toward a certificate of completion.

Training and Staff Development. Beginning during the earliest development phases and continuing with the field-test activities, Delaware has taken an aggressive approach to training and supporting their field-test teachers and in keeping state staff and school board members informed of plans and activities. Thus far, they have published three reports that evaluate the pilot studies and the scoring procedures, and they are producing another for the 1999-2000 field-test study. These field-test reports are available to the public. This aspect of aggressive data collection, documentation, and reporting has proven significant in revising the training plans, resource materials, and approaches for each year. Parent information brochures, question and answer resource documents, and web site information documents are available to support those who are implementing the alternate assessment. Teacher training and support are extensive, and a large teacher's training manual is updated each year. The manual includes an overview containing philosophy and background, directions for scoring, description of portfolio contents, sample portfolio entries, a full set of the standards for functional programs, definitions, and resources including "How to Develop a Student Schedule" and "Embedding Educational Objectives in the Regular Classroom." Monthly work sessions focused on the dimensions of the scoring rubric are offered in each county, thus adding resources for teachers. Since parents are considered an integral part of the alternate assessment, parent information nights are held in the fall and spring yearly.

The Delaware State Department of Education and the Center for Disability Studies have conducted scoring sessions throughout the state where teachers qualify to score portfolios. Scoring studies have been conducted to determine consistency between two teams of scorers. Results of this study showed that teams scored within at least one

point of each other on an individual dimension 84% of the time. (Subsequently, scoring methods have changed to reflect that scorers must have perfect agreement. See Scoring, Reporting, and Use.) At the time of this writing, 20 teachers were preparing to score the field study portfolios. Eleven district consultants (teachers who have put together and scored portfolios) are available for other teachers to call with questions. If the question can be answered with the training manual, the consultants answer it; if not, they send the questions to the Center for Disability Studies where state-level resource personnel provide answers or present the dilemma to the design group. In this manner, policy decisions are recorded and available for answering future questions. In addition, training for the alternate assessment is embedded in courses at Delaware colleges that have a graduate level certification program for teachers of students with severe disabilities.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. Delaware began to plan its reporting in the early stages of development (i.e., 1998) and has continued to refine those plans through the time that this paper was developed. The Delaware portfolios are scored using an analytic scoring method (i.e., one that produces subscores as well as an overall score). Each domain is scored separately. The five domain entries are scored according to five dimensions:

- Activity,
- Choice and Independence,
- Supports,
- Settings, and
- Interactions.

The portfolio is then given a total score that is measured against five performance levels. The performance levels include: Exceeds the Standard; Meets the Standard; Near the Standard; Below the Standard; or Well Below the Standard.

To begin the scoring process, schools give the portfolios to the state. Teachers are then brought together to conduct scoring. Various methods of scoring were tried and studied during the pilots, but 20 teachers who qualified to become Master Scorers conducted scoring for the Field Study. Two teachers independently scored each domain. Scores per domain were checked for perfect agreement (a change since the second pilot study). If the domain scores were discrepant, the teachers met to resolve all discrepancies. Scoring partners were required to maintain inter-rater reliability of .84, and if reliability had dropped below this, the scoring partners would have been retrained. For scoring sessions, portfolios are assigned numbers and identifying information is removed to diminish potential for bias.

Reporting plans are still emerging, but Delaware intends to report dimension, domain, and portfolio data back to the schools that will have the responsibility for reporting to parents. These scores will consist of five domain scores with five dimension scores for each and a total portfolio score. Reports will be aligned in both format and timing to the reports for the regular assessment system. However, discussions regarding aggregation and disaggregation are in progress at the state level. See the Delaware Department of Education website at www.doe.state.de.us for current information.

Florida.

Methods. Florida assesses qualified students with a variety of alternate assessments, including the Performance Assessment System for Students with

Disabilities (PASSD), at the same grade levels as the regular assessment, grades three through ten. The alternate assessment procedure is determined through the IEP process. PASSD activities are based on three cognitive levels, students who are able to participate in activities with extensive support, students who function with support, and students who are able to function independently on most activities but cannot meet the goals necessary for a standard high school diploma. For example, at the participatory cognitive level, a typical expectation might be to engage in effective communication cycles with support. At the supported cognitive functioning level, an expectation might be to manage personal work assignments with support, and at the independent level an expectation could include managing unstructured time. These expectations are benchmarks of the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma (a supplemental set of standards), developed and adopted by the state. Each district or school determines the activities used to address the benchmarks and standards. Activities developed are being standardized for general use throughout the state. In addition to the PASSD, at least three other alternate assessment procedures or combinations of these may be used.

1. Partial testing using the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (the state test) and supplementing this with a more appropriate alternate assessment, such as using the math section of the Florida Test and a more appropriate alternate assessment for the reading section.
2. Using classroom managed performance-based assessment systems such as the Brigance Inventories, Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communications Handicapped Children (TEACCH), Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS), or others.

3. Providing some combination of commercial inventories and performance-based activities.

Standards. Florida's Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services requires that the content of the alternate assessment closely resemble the content of state and district assessments while also addressing the specific domains critical for the student. Florida's philosophy is that their alternate assessment system is integrated with the assessment of all students and that the alternate assessment is simply the "ultimate modification."

Guidelines for Participation. Participation guidelines are based on the cognitive functioning of the student. In order to participate in the alternate assessment system, the student's demonstrated cognitive ability and behavior (not due to excessive absences or social, cultural, or economic differences) must prevent the student from completing the coursework that would allow achievement in the state standards with accommodations. The student must require extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application and transfer of skills necessary for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities. The student must also be unable to use academic skills at a minimal competency level in the home, community, or work site. Additionally, high school students must be unable to complete the regular diploma program, even with accommodations and adaptations, in order to qualify for participation in the alternate assessment system.

Training and Staff Development. Over the years, Florida has used a variety of methods to increase stakeholder and public awareness. Numerous publications have been created and mailed to school district staff, parent advocacy groups, state advisory

committees and others. These publications often are written for specific audiences (e.g., a Question and Answer Brochure on Assessment written specifically for parents). They are producing briefs with titles like "Alternate Assessment--What Is It?", "Guidelines on Determining Inclusion on State Testing", and "Choosing, Conducting and Reporting Alternate Assessments"; a website that includes Hot Topics, Frequently Asked Questions, and Publications Available, which are downloadable; a description of the Alternate Assessment Project; participants and contact lists; and direct links to the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) and the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) web sites. See www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/essment.htm for more information.

Awareness and training are considered critical to ensuring that key personnel understand the expectations, since all local education agencies (LEAs) were required to be conducting alternate assessments in Florida by July 1, 2000. The State alternate assessment coordinator meets with the school district test coordinators each August and with the directors of special education each September to discuss the inclusion of students with disabilities in statewide assessment and to discuss procedures and policies for alternate assessment. A series of alternate assessment training events are available for LEAs to access. These include:

- Initial orientation training events provided by the state alternate assessment coordinator, the alternate assessment manager, and teacher trainers focusing on federal and state requirements, the options for alternate assessment and an overview of the standards and performance-based assessment strategies.

- Subsequent follow-up training events become more specific for teachers working with students at the three cognitive levels. These sessions focus on integration of assessment into instruction, data collection, and determination of final student ratings.

The Alternate Assessment Project for training is available for those who have not participated in the last four years and for maintaining the ongoing training of teachers in all school districts. The focus in 1999-2000 has been on assisting school districts and schools that have not previously participated -- typically rural areas of the state. The regionalized technical assistance and training centers across the state, the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) increased their involvement in 1999-2000, particularly in providing for the logistics for training events. While most FDLRS centers are not involved as training centers, some FDLRS staff members have begun to serve in that role. Teachers who have used performance-based assessment successfully over the last few years are the primary training providers.

In addition, other technical assistance is provided on a request basis. The state alternate assessment coordinator responds to requests from individual districts for presentations. Support is available through the project or via teaming a requestor with a teacher in the area qualified to provide hands-on assistance. Also, school district personnel may call the state coordinator, go to the web site, or speak directly to the Project Manager when questions arise.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. Teachers conduct and score the assessment. Due to the individualization of the data gathered, aggregation of data is not recommended by the state. Assessment results are not transferred from the schools to the state but are used

locally for instructional programming, and school-level accountability. Alternate assessment procedures are described in each school district's procedures document and are monitored by the state through the required three year federal monitoring process. State reports describe how many students took the regular assessment and their results. Additional reports provide the percentage of students excluded from state assessment with a focus on obtaining an 85% inclusion rate of students with disabilities. Percentages of students taking the state assessment are included in the state's accountability formula for determining school grades.

Georgia

This state's founding principle for the alternate assessment is "equal opportunity to show progress." The Georgia Department of Education prefers assessment options that allow for the use of current data rather than the creation of a new accountability system and the administration of a new assessment. Therefore, their alternate assessment is based on the following rationale:

- All students with disabilities have IEPs with goals and objectives that are measurable;
- IDEA '97 requires that progress on IEP goals and objectives be measured and reported to parents on a regular basis;
- Best practice for students with disabilities includes the collection and analysis of data on each IEP goal, objective, or benchmark;
- Students with significant disabilities have individualized education programs that make it difficult to hold all students to one set of standards or curriculum goals; and

- On-going information about student achievement and progress is part of the regular instructional program, and an additional assessment is not necessary.

Methods. Georgia's alternate assessment is conducted by teachers and is unique for each student. It is based on five priority objectives included on the IEP, and information regarding each of these is collected on a student reporting form containing the following components:

- Student demographic data;
- Curriculum category (selection of five from eight possible, communication is required for each student);
- IEP objective or benchmark. This should be a critical life skill, a priority of the parents and student, should increase the independence of the student, enhance the student's quality of life, and be critical for access to multiple environments;
- Database. This refers to sources of information and measurement based on the criteria written into the objective. The data should document student progress and skill for the objectives being reported in each curriculum category in an ongoing manner;
- Level of performance. This may be number/percent of correct responses, correct trials, opportunities, steps of a correctly performed task analysis, or errors. The objective is measured for initial level and monitored for on-going progress; and
- Rating. The performance increase or decrease is calculated and rated as: initial, emerging, progressing, or functional. (See Scoring, Reporting, and Use for definitions).

Standards. The IEP team must identify priority objectives for each participating student, one objective from five of eight domains. Georgia's domains are Cognitive/Functional Academics, Vocational, Daily Living/Personal Management, Motor, Social/Emotional, Community, Recreation/Leisure, and Communication. Priority objectives are defined as those that are essential for the attainment of long-range goals.

Guidelines for Participation. Students who should participate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment are those whose IEP teams have determined that (a) it is not reasonable for the students to participate in the general statewide assessments even with maximum accommodations; (b) do not have the test-taking skills necessary for standard assessments; (c) participate in an alternate, functional curriculum; and (d) are working toward a special education diploma.

Training and Staff Development. Funding through Georgia's State Improvement Grant provides for 18 regional training sites throughout the state. The state has provided each training site with transparencies, manuals, and materials for including students with disabilities in assessments, not just the alternate assessment. The staff development system is based on a train-the-trainer system. Each local system sends a team of six staff members to the regional sites for training. This group returns to its district and trains the rest of the staff by the end of the school year. Each local school district is responsible to send the State Department the number of how many staff and faculty were trained in the following four areas:

1. Administration;
2. General education;
3. Special education; and

4. Others, including parents and related services.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. Throughout the duration of each participating student's IEP, the teacher prepares the information on a student reporting form. Just prior to the end of the IEP implementation period, the teacher measures and records final progress on the five priority goals and objectives. The criterion measure is the one indicated in the objective on the IEP. For example, the criterion may be number/percent of correct responses. For each objective, the sources of information and measurement of the student performance level will be judged. The student reporting form contains a column for rating each objective, and the performance increase or decrease is calculated and indicated as a rating using the following rubric:

- Initial: The student did not progress beyond initial level or is totally dependent on prompts that are not written as criterion for the objective;
- Emerging: The student performs the objective as written at fifty percent or less of criterion;
- Progressing: The student performs the objective at fifty percent or more of the written criterion; and
- Functional: The student meets or exceeds the objective as written.

Beginning in the school year 2000-2001, local school districts will report data from the alternate assessments on a scannable form to the State Department of Education for those grades at which there are state required assessments. At the time of this writing (Summer 2000) the entire state of Georgia was undergoing accountability reform initiated by the governor, therefore methods for aggregation and disaggregation of data were unclear.

Indiana

Indiana's general assessment is conducted at grades three, six, eight, and ten using the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS/TerraNova). The grade ten exam is high stakes for students. Students must pass this exit test to obtain a diploma. Through stakeholder meetings involving administrators, teachers, parents, and educational consultants from a variety of education backgrounds, Indiana developed the first electronic portfolio method of alternate assessment in the nation. This group reviewed other states' alternate assessment programs and chose various aspects from several as the foundations for the Indiana Assessment System of Educational Proficiencies (IASEP), their electronic portfolio. A list of beliefs, similar to the general education assessment beliefs, which include that what is important for one child is important for all children, was the driving force behind the development of their alternate assessment system. In the 1998 –1999 school year, the electronic portfolio was piloted with more than 400 students in nine locations throughout the state. During the 1999-2000 school year, a statewide pilot was conducted.

Methods.

The electronic portfolio includes menu-driven software that allows recording of student information. IASEP is used to collect student work samples that demonstrate performance on specific skills, not just best work. Both digital audio and video clips are taken of the students' work, including community activities and electronically scanned paper work. This method provides opportunities for students to demonstrate skills using multiple assessment techniques over time and across environments. Teachers of participating students, including therapists, paraprofessionals, parents, and administrators,

collect data annually, but the information will only be aggregated at grades three, six, eight, and ten, when general education data is reported.

Standards. IEP teams choose from 1200 skills to rate as part of the IEP decision-making process. Of these skills, 100 are considered core skills and are both academic and functional. The IASEP consists of one academic domain (Information Acquisition and Use), which is linked closely to Indiana's common academic standards. This choice allows for an evaluation of the progress of any student toward the attainment of skills and knowledge judged as important for all Indiana students. These links also allow for the integration of criterion-referenced data across the general assessment system and the alternate system, facilitating the aggregation of data for all students in the state.

Guidelines for Participation. Students with severe disabilities who are unable to participate in state or district assessment, with or without accommodations, are included in Indiana's alternate assessment program. For a small percentage of students who do not strictly qualify for the IASEP, Indiana is currently debating using pieces of the general education assessment with pieces of the IASEP in order to use the information from the assessment to improve the content and quality of these students' education.

Training and Staff Development. Following the development of the assessment software, the IASEP team developed training materials for the pilot sites. Teachers of students with severe and moderate disabilities in these pilot sites received two days of training consisting of an overview of federal mandates and system development and an introduction to and practice with the computer rating system and the electronic documentation system (i.e., scanner, video and digital cameras, and audio recording system). Parents were asked to attend a two-hour information session during which the

system was explained and the teachers had an opportunity to practice with the system. Feedback was solicited and follow-up training including support were provided based on this feedback.

The Indiana Department of Education, Division of Special Education bought three pilot teachers' contracts in order to allow them to be available for full-time, on-going training throughout the state. The state also trained technology directors (i.e., computer personnel) in 175 out of 294 school corporations to be a support for their local teachers. In June of 1999, Indiana began a train-the-trainer model and currently boasts 900 teachers, 35 related service providers, and 80 administrators trained in IASEP procedures. One region of the state has chosen to conduct its own on-going training. The state produced four training videotapes, each 15 minutes in length. One tape provides an overview of the system. The second describes the use of IASEP software. A third tape describes working with the hardware and peripherals, and the final tape addresses data security issues. The state provided 400 copies of each tape with 200 copies of the first tape closed-captioned. The high rate of training provided in the state of Indiana is a proactive strategy that prepares many teachers who are not currently providing services to students but who will be participating partners in the alternate assessment.

Indiana also maintains an extensive communication plan that includes a regularly scheduled newsletter and maintenance of a web site and list serve. Furthermore, the state has collected information about who is trained, what corporation they are from, and the number of training hours they have accumulated. This information has been consolidated on a database that is open to the entire state.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. For Indiana's portfolios, the lead teachers score their own students' portfolios using a rubric. With a minor modification, the scoring rubric for the alternate assessment duplicates a rubric used in the general education assessment. Indiana is now facing the challenge of translating the performance data from the IASEP rating system to a format that is consistent with the criterion-referenced data from the general education assessment. Indiana's plan is to use Elliott and Kratochwill's (1998) plan for integrating statewide standards-based assessment systems by dividing the general assessment into five levels (advanced proficient, proficient, partially proficient, below partially proficient, and prerequisite skills). Students participating in the alternate assessment would automatically receive a prerequisite skills level rating. Accountability for progress within the prerequisite skills level would be returned to the IEP team. To increase sensitivity of the rating scale for students with severe disabilities, "No Opportunity", "Not Applicable", and "Not Observed" have been included as sub categories under the additional "Nonexistent" category. Within the "prerequisite skills" level, categories consist of Emergent Level, Supported Independence Level, Functional Independence Level, and Independent Level. The IASEP team has developed case study exemplars for use in training teachers to interpret the rating system. During the summer of 2000, two independent ratings were gathered on a sample of the pilot students to establish interrater agreement in the application of the rubric. In order to validate the content of the rating rubric, an expert panel of educators and parents was gathered to evaluate whether the wording of the rubric provided an accurate assessment of the participating students' skill levels. Further validation has been conducted by correlating students' item and domain scale scores from the IASEP with the corresponding item and

domain scores from the Adaptive Behavior Scale – School Edition (AAMR ABS – S:2). The state continues to struggle with the Elliott and Kratochwill solution for reporting data and is questioning the consequences of returning accountability decisions to IEP teams, which have traditionally applied varying standards in documenting educational growth for students with disabilities.

While Indiana's general education assessment is a high-stakes test at the student level (i.e., students who do not pass the exit exam will not get a diploma), the IASEP is not. There are no sanctions at the building or class level either. A reporting system has not yet been determined; however, the system will include a minimum of building level, corporation level (i.e., district), and state level reporting. The alternate assessment will be subsumed within the general education reporting -- that is, the number with and without accommodations and the number above and below standards will be reported. In prior years, some students, considered diagnostic students, could be exempted from the assessment. Beginning the 2000-2001 school year, the term diagnostic student is to be done away with. In this manner, all students in Indiana will be assessed.

Minnesota

Minnesota began developing state special education goals that flowed out of state general education goals in 1996. In addition, a continuous progress evaluation model was developed to assess progress on the special education goals. Because of the nature of this model, alternate assessment naturally aligned with these special education goals. Groups of general and special education teachers developed the essential attributes for the three developmental academic alternate assessments -- Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. In addition, a statewide advisory committee developed a set of principle statements

including that the assessment must meet the intent of the law; must not be abusive to students, teachers, or parents; and must be easy to understand and use. These principles guided the development of the alternate assessment, which is used in grades three, five, eight, and ten.

Methods and Standards. Within a short timeframe surrounding the statewide test, teachers use an attribute checklist to rank students' developmental skill levels in order to judge the students' achievement. Minnesota's alternate assessment is available in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and a functional skills area. The functional assessment includes some academics. Teachers choose one or more assessments that align with the statewide test from which the student has been exempted. The IEP team determines in which alternate assessment(s) a student should participate.

Guidelines for Participation. Students participating in Minnesota's alternate assessment are those who are incapable of taking the statewide test. In Minnesota, "incapable" has been defined as a total lack of cognitive ability to participate within a subject area. An IEP team may consider a student to be a candidate for alternate assessment if taking the regular state test would be detrimental to the student, with the exclusion of reasonable levels of stress or anxiety, and if the IEP team has specifically modified educational goals to the extent that the student has not been exposed to the general curriculum. When making the decision to exempt students from the statewide test, the IEP team considers curriculum material based on chronological grade level.

Training and Staff Development. One of Minnesota's guiding principles for development of their alternate assessment was that they would not be abusive to those involved. As a result of field testing and inservice of directors and special education

coordinators, district staff indicated that the alternate assessment was easy to understand and that there was no need for general training. Based on that feedback, the state department decided to not use teacher time or district money for unnecessary training. Training has however been provided for statewide testing technicians and other groups, such as school counselors, that requested training.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. Once the areas for alternate assessment are chosen (Reading, Writing, Math, or Functional), teachers score student performance on the survey using a scale from one to seven with the following descriptors as markers: (1-2) Awareness, (3-5) Understanding, (6-7) Application. Based on teacher input, students participating in the functional portion of the alternate assessment receive scores on a seven-point scale. The scale focuses on independence level and is labeled with the following descriptors: (1-2) No participation/Full support, (3-5) Moderate participation/Moderate support, (6-7) Full participation/No support. The teacher fills in a bubble sheet that corresponds to the teacher's best judgment of the student's developmental achievement level. These scales and format are similar to Minnesota's continuous progress evaluation model for all students. The bubble sheet is sent to their local director of special education who in turns electronically sends it to the State Department of Education. The data from all students in the local district is put into tables and quickly returned by grade level, school buildings, and disability category.

Other data reporting issues have not yet been fully developed. For some low incidence student categories, Minnesota may report "Metro and Non-metro" or perhaps a simple statewide report will be issued to ensure confidentiality. The state will disaggregate alternate assessment data by categories, district, or grade for public

reporting. However, great care will be exercised due to concerns surrounding the potential for misuse of data and the privacy of individual students and their families.

North Dakota

The North Dakota legislature has mandated that all students be administered a standardized test in core learning areas at appropriate grade levels. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) currently administers the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBSV/Terra Nova) at grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 in the areas of Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science. Additionally, DPI, in collaboration with the State Curriculum Council and statewide teams of teachers have committed to developing and implementing state content standards in these same core areas plus health, physical education, the arts, world languages, and technology. In July 1998, DPI's Standards, Assessment, Learning, and Teaching (SALT) team reviewed the process that guided the development of North Dakota's alternate assessment. This review resulted in a uniform development protocol, which included drafting expanded content standards and benchmarks prior to the development of performance assessments. Although North Dakota does not require that school districts utilize these standards or engage in assessing all students against these standards, except as required by federal ESEA law, these standards were adopted for use as a basis for the alternate assessment.

Methods. North Dakota's alternate assessment will be completed at the same grade levels as for general education students, that is, 4, 6, 8, and 10, or more frequently if individual districts conduct separate district-wide assessments. North Dakota's task force determined that the method for their system will be considered a "body of evidence" with the following minimum components:

- Table of contents;
- One content summary cover sheet for each content area (i.e., Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies) and documentation of performance on standards; and
- Participation criteria.

Standards. All students participating in the alternate assessment in North Dakota will be assessed on the state standards for all students through benchmarks and expanded standards. The content standards consist of a description of what all students should know and be able to do within a particular discipline or content domain. The benchmarks are a translation of a standard into what all students should understand and be able to do at developmentally appropriate levels (grades 4, 6, 8, 12). Modified benchmarks address the applicability of the benchmark for students with significant disabilities. The expanded standards include examples of specific knowledge that support the standard and the benchmarks, including real-world performance activities. Real-world performance activities are designed to show the applicability of standards for all students, are performed in a variety of environments and through a variety of response systems, and may include a variety of supports. The North Dakota Alternate Assessment (NDAA) measures performance against the standards in the areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science with the goal of providing evidence that students have acquired skills and knowledge necessary to become as independent as possible, to document student performance and the performance of the program serving the student, to merge instructional best practices and assessment activities, and to provide information in the development of curriculum that is responsive to students' needs.

The NDAA process is intended to be flexible, dynamic, and objective documentation of a student's performance. Documents developed for the purpose of the alternate assessment are designed to help educators and parents recognize the wide diversity of the student's capabilities within a program. The NDAA reflects various levels of skill development and achievement for students across various curricular domains and settings. The IEP team works together to choose entries that demonstrate goals for the assessment. The student and the special education teacher are to be the major contributors to the document, but other members of the instructional and IEP team are to be accountable for keeping documentation of specified standards and for the development of entries as well.

Guidelines for Participation. North Dakota's Alternate Assessment Task Force developed guidelines that will be used by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to determine which students will participate in the alternate assessment system. This decision must be based on the following.

- Student's cognitive ability and adaptive behavior, prevent completion of part or all of the general curriculum, course of study, and content standards;
- Student requires extensive, frequent, and individualized instruction in multiple settings in order to maintain or generalize skills necessary to function in the community and during recreation/leisure, and vocational activities; and
- Student is working on standards that are so expanded and individualized that the general assessment does not reflect the content the student is being taught. (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction: Guidelines for the Participation of

Students with Disabilities in State/District Assessment Programs, September 1999)

Training and Staff Development. To this point, training in North Dakota has been conducted with four field development sites by the state Alternate Assessment Development Team. These sites have included a limited sample of teachers who have assisted in the development of the process, identification of significant issues, and the development of training materials best suited to convey the skills and concepts necessary to implement the alternate assessment process. Training changes have been made based on input from the field development sites and training was conducted during the summer of 2000. All educators of students requiring an alternate assessment were invited to attend.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. Teachers in North Dakota collect student work throughout the school year and compile it as a "body of evidence". The body of evidence will be taken to a central location for scoring by other teachers, the development team, and workgroup members. Aggregated data will be compiled by the state, and individual scores will be sent to special education units for dissemination to local school districts with disaggregation of data if possible. At this time, it has been determined that the scoring protocol will be returned to the schools where it will become part of the student's cumulative record. A final determination has not been made regarding whether the body of evidence will be destroyed after scoring has taken place or returned to the school district.

The North Dakota Standards, Assessments, Learning, and Teaching (SALT) team has been considering what level of accountability would be appropriate for their state.

Since there is no high-stakes assessment in the state at this time, the decision for student-level, teacher-level, building-level, and/or district-level accountability continues to be a issue. Visit the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction website at http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/dpi/speced/particip/particip.htm for current information.

Utah

Utah's Alternate Assessment was developed by an interagency committee of state and local personnel in response to IDEA '97 with consideration of other states' implementation of assessment requirements. The committee established a workgroup comprised of administrators, teachers, and related service personnel to review the state curriculum and Life Skills framework. During the course of the 1998-1999 school year, this committee developed skills and benchmarks aligned with the Life Skills attributes. Utah's Alternate Assessment was piloted during the 1999-2000 school year.

Methods. Utah's Alternate Assessment (UAA) might be the only state system that focuses on rate of learning. The assessment is based on an individually determined set of skills selected each year by the student's IEP team based on IEP goals. From a list of indicators, the team selects measurable and observable skills on which to collect data in the fall and spring at roughly the same time as other state and district assessments are being administered. Measuring the rate of student learning is intended to allow the assessments to be individually determined yet comparable to other assessments for reporting purposes. It also is intended to enable teachers to track the mastery of skills across time.

Standards. Students who participate in Utah's Alternate Assessment will be assessed on Life Skills benchmarks, which are touted as a portrait of the attributes of a

well-educated person and is a framework that supports and influences all content areas taught in Utah's public schools. A state-level stakeholder workgroup reviewed the state curriculum and Life Skills and determined that the Life Skills benchmarks were appropriate for all students. These Life Skills include

- Lifelong learning,
- Complex thinking,
- Effective communication,
- Collaboration,
- Responsible citizenship, and
- Employability.

Indicators for developmental levels that correspond to grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12 were constructed for individual teacher determination of specific measurable skills that are appropriate for participating students.

Guidelines for Participation. Students from kindergarten through grade twelve with significant or severe disabilities who participate in a functional curriculum rather than an academic or vocationally oriented curriculum as part of their school program are eligible for the UAA. The UAA is administered to students receiving special education services for whom the Utah Statewide and Core Assessments are not appropriate.

Training and Staff Development. The Utah State Office of Education has presented at statewide conferences in an effort to share information regarding their alternate assessment, with use of the system being voluntary in the 1999-2000 school year. In January 2000, a pilot teacher-training project was initiated for districts and teachers who had not voluntarily begun using alternate assessment. Teachers and

administrators who have had first-hand experience with the alternate assessment system are providing the training, and the State Department of Education is providing funding for release time for these teacher/trainers. The state office is exploring the use of an "e-learning" system to train teachers and administrators in the alternate assessment process.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. In both the fall and the spring, teachers collect data on two IEP objectives to be used to measure the rate of student learning and to track the mastery of skills across time. The teacher fills out an instrument for each student in the predetermined areas of assessment. Copies of these instruments will be sent to the State Office of Education for aggregation. Although at the time of this writing (summer 2000) the decision was not final, scores will likely be reported at the building level for schools where there are more than 10 students in the same grade or age level. For mid-sized districts, scores across schools may be combined for a number larger than 10 for reporting at a district level. For smaller districts with less than 10 students at any given grade or age level, scores would not be reported in order to protect the identity of individual students. Scores will be reported as rate-of-learning scores grouped by Life Skill area.

West Virginia

West Virginia's general assessment, which is low-stakes for students, consists of administering the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (SAT-9) at grades three through eleven. Their alternate assessment approach was developed through a task force of various stakeholders with no contracted assistance. The purpose of West Virginia's alternate assessment is to provide statewide and district specific data to guide program improvements while encouraging access to the general curriculum for all students.

Methods & Standards. The West Virginia Alternate Assessment involves the use of real world performance demonstrations to determine a student's level of mastery on a specific set of skills selected from the Instructional Goals and Objectives (IGOs) for all students. This subset of the IGOs is referred to as the Alternate Assessment Curriculum Framework. A student's performance related to the Framework is evaluated each year from grades three through eleven across the three programmatic levels of early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. Ongoing teacher collection of data to verify the student's level of performance and the completion of a Skill Inventory at the end of the school year are integral to West Virginia's approach. The teacher of a student taking the alternate assessment selects a data collection/documentation method appropriate to the assessment of each Curriculum Framework skill, which may include

- Work or product review -- This is a pre-planned activity requiring the student to produce a response or product,
- Structured observations -- This is a pre-planned activity in which the performance demonstration is arranged or staged. The student is given directions to perform a skill,
- Spontaneous observation -- The student's performance is observed in a naturally occurring situation, or
- Interview – The teacher interviews a parent, teacher, employer, or other individual who is familiar with the student's real world performance.

For each student participating in the alternate assessment in West Virginia, a lead teacher is responsible for organizing the assessment. In the fall, the lead teacher plans a schedule for teaching and assessment activities and demonstrations based on the

Curriculum Frameworks. The teacher records the information in a "datafolio" with a brief description of the performance demonstration, setting/environment, intensity of instructional assistance, along with the student's performance and a product or work sample if available.

Guidelines for Participation. The IEP team determines and documents if a student should participate in the alternate assessment using sufficient historical data to apply the following criteria:

- Demonstrate cognitive abilities and adaptive skills that prevent completion of the state approved IGOs even with program modifications and adaptations;
- Be unable to apply or use academic skills at a minimal competency level in natural settings when instructed solely or primarily through school-based instruction; and
- Require extensive direct instruction in multiple settings to master and generalize skills necessary for functional application in school, work, home, and community environments.

If the student is 14 years of age or older, the student must be unable to complete the graduation standards necessary to earn a regular diploma, even with extended learning opportunities and/or instructional modifications; thus, be working toward a modified diploma.

Training and Staff Development. West Virginia has strived to continually keep its stakeholders informed from the initial planning stages through the pilot process. In the spring and summer of 1999, staff provided overviews of plans and developmental activities whenever the local special education directors or local test coordinators met.

Meetings also occurred with state leadership personnel, including the State Board of Education to keep them aware of developments. After the pilot was initiated, a question and answer document was prepared and sent to all special education and assessment directors with the request that they be shared with a variety of stakeholders. Similarly, the Alternate Assessment Curriculum Framework will be disseminated to all special education teachers and administrators throughout the state in fall 2000.

An Administration Manual, which includes a set of performance demonstrations, was prepared to guide the alternate assessment process. The manual and all procedures were designed to parallel the SAT-9 procedures to the greatest extent possible. Teachers, special education directors, and test coordinators involved in the pilot received one day of training in October of 1999. The training began with an overview of the philosophy and context, moved through a description of the Alternate Assessment Curriculum Framework, and involved a detailed review of the manual and hands-on activities.

Follow-up training and teacher exchanges were the responsibility of the counties, which were funded to support activities during the pilot year. Teachers in some of the counties met monthly after school to discuss progress and experiences. There was no formal state or regional support system during the pilot year. However, based on the evaluation of the pilot, a statewide assistance system will be developed.

Plans for statewide training include using teachers who piloted the alternate assessment to assist in early fall and throughout the 2000 – 2001 school year. Training will occur within the eight regions throughout the state. West Virginia involved the Mid-South Regional Resource Center (RRC) at the University of Kentucky to help evaluate

the pilot process by gathering feedback from the teachers and administrators prior to making changes in the system and planning statewide staff development.

Scoring, Reporting, and Use. The Alternate Assessment Skill Inventory Rubric consists of four ratings defined in the following manner:

- Awareness -- The student is beginning to learn the skill in one setting and one performance demonstration with continuous instructional assistance, but performs the skill incorrectly much of the time;
- Progressing -- The student demonstrates the skill correctly some of the time but hesitantly, that is without fluency, in one setting and one performance demonstration with frequent, periodic, instructional assistance;
- Competent -- The student demonstrates the skill correctly most of the time, but sometimes hesitantly, that is, sometimes lacks fluency, in two settings and two different performance demonstrations with occasional instructional assistance; and
- Generalized -- The student demonstrates the skill correctly and fluently unassisted in three or more settings with three or more performance demonstrations.

The rubric requires the teacher to rate the student's performance on four dimensions: level of accuracy and fluency, number of environments, intensity of instructional assistance, and number of varied demonstrations. The teacher maintains this information in a datafolio of documentation that verifies the performance demonstrations. Each datafolio should include a completed performance demonstration form and student work samples. Pictures, audiotapes, or videotapes may be included with parent permission. Also, a parent conference is held to explain and verify performance levels. At the end of

the assessment period, an Alternate Assessment Skills Inventory record form is to be completed and submitted to the State Department of Education.

Student results data from all components of the Statewide Assessment Program are used for instructional planning and program improvement. Alternate Assessment results provide aggregated performance data for participating students that can be incorporated into classroom, school, and county needs assessment and planning for instructional improvement, staff development, staffing, and allocation of resources.

Summary and Conclusions

Although these eight states were selected because they were "relatively advanced in their development and implementation," it is clear that there are many scoring, reporting, and use decisions yet to be made. Yet generally, these states have advanced training and staff development systems established.

Training and Staff Development. With the exception of Minnesota, the states have taken remarkably similar approaches to training and staff development for teachers implementing the alternate assessment. In large part this is because the states are still in a pilot-testing phase and are typically working with few participants. Initially, draft training manuals and other reference materials are prepared. Small groups of teachers were convened to hear plans for how the assessment process would work. These field test participants implemented the system for a short period and returned to provide feedback, which was used to refine the materials before a larger pilot test is implemented. At that stage, the first group of teachers became the primary trainers, with assistance from state staff. Georgia, however, chose to train a team from each LEA with the expectation that the team would return to train others in their district.

Training in assessment is only part of the job, however. Most states also convene teachers and train them on scoring. Again, a small cadre of teachers is usually selected to become master scorers. This general approach to training is evidenced in some of the earlier starting states such as Maryland and Kentucky as well (see Olsen, 1998). Each state reviewed for the current synthesis used teachers who successfully implemented programs for students with severe disabilities as trainers. Several states mentioned that long-term plans are for ongoing development of a cadre of teachers who can provide training while using first-hand references to their experiences. One respondent said:

> Probably the most critical thing about training that we are seeing now is that teachers make the best trainers--we now have the capacity to have teachers provide training in any area of the state. (We use those folks who have been doing performance based assessment for the last four years). The other critical component is to provide follow-up to teachers learning the process--you almost have to walk them through the process step by step, let them practice, and come back for more! (C. Allman, personal communication, April 5, 2000)

Florida, Delaware, and Georgia are especially aggressive in their training and support activities and have developed a specific sequence through which teachers progress. Florida has one full-time project manager devoted to training and technical assistance for alternate assessment and two Department of Education personnel who provide considerable time to alternate assessment initiatives. Delaware reports that it has embedded training on alternate assessment into the coursework of those preparing for certification to serve students with severe disabilities. On the other end of the continuum is Minnesota, which consciously designed its system to be so simple that no specific

training would be needed. When they offered training, local participants indicated that they saw little need for training.

Technical assistance and follow-up were reported to be essential to high quality implementation. Several states provided funding to convene pilot-test teachers as a platform to share experiences and learn from each other throughout the year. Annual scoring events in Kentucky, Maryland, and other states with which the authors are familiar are considered excellent opportunities for teachers to continuing learning.

Most supports are still being provided through a central state office or a funded project. At the time of this writing, few states were using their regional training and technical assistance offices as key deliverers. However, it might be expected that as the systems mature and procedures become firm, these centers will play an increasingly important role.

As the number of trainees begins to increase, the potential for inconsistency grows, especially as these systems progress toward full implementation. Therefore, reference materials are considered extremely important. The following were among the items mentioned by the state sources:

- Parent brochures;
- A periodic report or newsletter on progress, new information, and plans;
- General awareness announcements that could be incorporated in organization newsletters;
- Administration manuals with background information, philosophy statements, forms, data collection procedures, and scoring procedures;
- Copies of assessment instruments or procedures;

- Copies of state standards;
- Scoring criteria and benchmark examples;
- Question and answer documents; and
- Materials for trainers (e.g., scripts, transparencies, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts).

In at least two states (i.e., Florida and Delaware), web sites have been developed that contain this reference material. In addition, some states are compiling policy databases that document questions from the field and how the state is responding to questions. This approach is an attempt to ensure consistency. Consistent policy implementation is critical to the integrity of any complex system. For the most part, the states selected for this review have accepted and responded to the challenge by installing extensive procedures to ensure in-depth training, consistent follow-up, availability of reference materials, continuous evaluation, and provisions for refinement.

Methods, Scoring, Reporting, and Use. Warlick and Olsen (1999) conducted a synthesis of alternate assessment methods in nine states, two of which overlap with the current synthesis, Delaware and Indiana. The authors of the prior work ascertained that most states were utilizing a portfolio method of assessment, including both Delaware and Indiana. The current synthesis supports this assertion (see Table 1). The six states using a portfolio method have chosen to name this method datafolio, body of evidence, electronic portfolio, and simply portfolio.

Most states have chosen to base their alternate assessment on a pool of standards drawn, in varying manners, from their state general education standards. Georgia has

chosen to base their assessment on individually determined goals and objectives (i.e., IEPs), and Utah based theirs on a functional framework (see Table 2).

Table 1

Overview of States' Methods of Alternate Assessment

States	Portfolio	IEP Progress
DE	X	
FL	X	
GA		X
IN	X	
MN	X	
ND	X	
UT		X
WV	X	

Table 2

Overview of States' Methods Related to State Standards

States	Standards from a State Pool	Individual or LEA Standards
DE	X	
FL	X (Developed at local level from the state standards)	
GA		X
IN	X	
MN	X	
ND	X	
UT	X (State Life Skills framework)	
WV	X	

Scoring refers to how items are to be scored and the extent to which scores will be comparable to scores produced in the general assessment. It also refers to who will score or record the results. The complex issues of reporting data from alternate assessment and the use of this data must be considered prior to establishing the assessment in order to ensure that the information can be reported in a useful and legally compliant manner. According to Thurlow and Thompson (1999):

> The purpose of alternate assessments in state assessment systems is not to address individual accountability measures, but rather, to increase the capacity of large-scale accountability systems that create information on how a school, district, or state is doing in terms of student performance. (p. 6)

States have chosen multi-dimensional performance rubric methods, rating scales, or growth/change methods for scoring their alternate assessments. Georgia decided to use a performance rubric along with a growth measurement. *Using these scoring methods,* states chose either to have the lead teachers score their own students' assessments or to have a third party score them (see Table 3). Delaware and North Dakota were the only two states in the current synthesis that involved third party scorers. However, Kentucky, Maryland, and a number of other states use third party scorers to avoid appearance of bias and to increase consistency.

Table 3

States' Alternate Assessment Scoring Choices

States	Teachers Self-Score	Third Party Scoring	Multi-dimensional Performance Rubric	Growth/Change
DE		X	X	
FL	X			X
GA	X		X	X
IN	X		X	
MN	X		X	
ND		X	X	
UT	X			X
WV	X		X	

Standardized procedures for scoring, such as the predefined criteria of a rubric, provide a common ground for comparing scores across students or groups of students -- the basic premise of large-scale assessment. The practice of self-scoring an assessment, even with the standardized criteria of a rubric, has serious implications for issues of validity due to scorer bias. No matter how objective a scorer intends to be, when one has a vested interest in the outcome, it becomes difficult, if not impossible to function as a neutral scorer.

Equally important is the question of how scoring of IEP goals and objectives is different from gathering data for current level of performance, which is done annually as part of the IEP process. According to Haertel (1999), three points can summarize the purposes of any large-scale educational assessment. Assessments are used to (a) provide accountability or comparative information, (b) inform the public about educational issues, and (c) change educational practice by influencing curriculum and instruction. Individual data, since they do not get aggregated, do not meet any of these purposes of large-scale assessment. Another critical aspect of scoring deals with the focus of the scoring criteria. Table 4 summarizes the three foci of our eight states: student performance, opportunities to learn (quality of the program), or both.

Table 4

Scoring Criteria Focus

	Student Performance	Opportunities to Learn	Both
DE			X
FL	X		
GA	X		
IN	X		
MN	X		
ND	X		
WV			X

At this time, some states have not yet made aggregation/disaggregation decisions (e.g., Delaware, Georgia, and Minnesota) and at least one state has chosen not to aggregate the alternate assessment scores with the general assessment scores (e.g., Florida). Failure to aggregate data may negate the purpose of alternate assessments to create information about how well a school, district, or state is achieving their

instructional goals in terms of student performance and is inconsistent with IDEA regulations at 34 CFR.300.139.

We have provided general overviews of the alternate assessment systems emerging in eight states. Our original intent was to provide guidance to states that are still developing systems about how they might benefit from these states' decisions about key issues of scoring, reporting, use, and training. While we were able to document some of these practices, most are still evolving. It might be as long as three to five years before states settle into routines in terms of these issues and more precise guidance can be given.

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Appendix

Criteria for inclusion and strategies for collection of information.

- Initially, technical assistance coordinators in the six Regional Resource Centers were consulted. These individuals were asked to nominate one or two states in their regions that they considered to be innovative, to have a strong probability of being implemented, and to have the likelihood of leading to stronger accountability than the current system These technical assistance coordinators were also asked to describe the alternate assessment activities these states were conducting.
- Once voices within the Regional Resource Centers were heard and states with promising plans were determined, the alternate assessment contact persons within each state were approached and the following questions were asked of each:
    - What is your state doing regarding alternate assessments?
    - How was the decision made to conduct alternate assessments in this manner?
    - Are you using external contracts, commercial firms, or developing your alternate assessment strictly internally?
    - How much staff time is assigned to work on your alternate assessment development?
    - How does the data gathered through these assessments flow to the state and subsequently, how are they reported to the public?
    - What professional development has been done with administrators and teachers to prepare them for collecting the information for alternate assessments?
    - To what extent has the state addressed or does the state plan to address the issue of implementation evaluation?

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